



# Planning Update

## *Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge*

### Planning Update #2



A Reach of the Sacramento River With Riparian Forest

USFWS

*“You can not step twice into the same river.....”*

*Heraclitus, 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.*

### **Greetings from the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge:**

This is the second Planning Update from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to keep you informed and involved in the comprehensive conservation planning efforts for the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge).

These Updates will be sent out periodically to local landowners, government agencies, private organizations, and others who have requested to be placed on the Refuge's mailing list.

Please refer to map inserts for overviews of the Refuge and the Sacramento NWR Complex..

### **Refuge News**

#### **Refuge Manager Moves On!**

Ramon Vega has moved on after serving 11 years as the assistant manager in charge of the Sacramento River NWR. Ramon accepted the position of "Southwest Strategy Coordinator" in the Regional Office in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Best Wishes Ramon!

The Assistant Refuge Manager position is being advertised and we anticipate having the new manager "on-board" by November.

## Refuge Biology

Over 30 research projects have been proposed and are under way at Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Researchers come from universities such as California State University, Chico, the University of California (UC) Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz and the University of Denver. Private non-profit conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Point Reyes Bird Observatory and Sacramento River Partners are providing important management oriented research that guides riparian habitat restoration.



Bank and Cliff Swallow Colony along River USFWS

Federal and State agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Water Resources, and California Department of Fish and Game also conduct research along the river and at the refuge. Researchers investigate a wide range of biological and physical phenomenon. These include local breeding migratory songbirds, status of the Bank Swallow and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, small mammals, the Western Pond Turtle, fishes of the tributaries, chinook salmon habitat, status of the Giant Garter Snake, beetles and spiders, avian (bird) predators and prey, tree, shrub and grass

growth and survival, vegetation succession, Valley Oak ecology, Black Walnut hybridization, water quality, soil nitrogen mineralization, oxbow lake development, and river channel and floodplain dynamics.

Sacramento River NWR is often a component of much larger projects that may include the entire Sacramento River landscape or the known range of a species. Knowledge gained through research is an essential element in riparian habitat restoration and refuge management— with it we can manage our natural resources for the benefit of wild things and the people who enjoy them.

## Refuge Recreation Opportunities:

There are a variety of ways to visit the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to enjoy fishing, bird watching and many other activities.

Packer Lake, which is two-miles north of Princeton on Hwy 45, is open to fishing year-round. Anglers can seek the elusive blue-gill and largemouth bass. The primitive boat launch area provides access via a boat that is easily carried and there is limited bank fishing. No facilities are available.

The Llano Seco Unit is just 10 miles southwest of Chico, on Seven Mile Lane. The two elevated viewing platforms and two-thirds of a mile walking trail provide great opportunities for bird watching, photography, and hiking. This 700-acre wetland area provides food for wintering waterfowl and is one of the few places in the Sacramento Valley to easily see sandhill cranes in the early fall. Restrooms and parking are available.

## Refuge Finalizes Memorandum of Understanding

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge), California Department of Parks and Recreation (Northern Buttes District), and the California Department of

Fish and Game (Sacramento River Wildlife Area) recently finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for land management purposes along the Sacramento River between Red Bluff and Colusa.

The MOU is a formal document that allows the local agency staff to share equipment and expertise. The purpose is to mutually manage, monitor, restore, and enhance lands for fish, wildlife, plants, and wildlife-dependent recreation along the Sacramento River.

## Comprehensive Conservation Plan: Public Scoping

### Public Scoping Meetings

As one of the first planning steps in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process, public scoping meetings were held in Willows, Chico, Red Bluff and Colusa in May and June 2001. These meetings were focused on introducing people to the Refuge, introducing the CCP process, and obtaining comments from people concerning their ideas and issues about the Sacramento River Refuge.



Public Scoping Meeting Discussions

USFWS

### Public Scoping Comment Period Extended

The public scoping comment period deadline which previously closed July 11, 2001 is being extended.

The public scoping comment period will be extended until October 19, 2001. We encourage early submittal of your comments so that we may fully include them in the planning process. All comments will be recorded and evaluated for use in the CCP.

### Public Scoping Meetings Overview

We would like to thank everyone who took the time and effort to come out to the public scoping meetings to listen, be listened to, and provide comments directly or through the mail. Over 170 people attended the four public scoping sessions and provided over 250 comments as of July 2001 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Public Scoping Meetings 2001

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
30 May	Willows, CA	23
04 June	Chico, CA	55
05 June	Red Bluff, CA	13
06 June	Colusa, CA	8

All comments and issues received have been reviewed and compiled for use in determining and clarifying issues that will guide the Service in creating and refining the Refuge's CCP goals, objectives, and strategies. These comments were categorized into five main areas: public use, public access, management / outreach, flood control / erosion control, and opinions / questions (see Table 2).

Table 2: Public Scoping Comments and Issues Categories

<u>Category</u>	<u># of Comments*</u>
Public Use Issues	58
Public Access Issues	64
Management / Outreach Issues	85
Flood Control / Erosion Issues	11
Opinion / Questions	37

\* Received as of July 2001



Permanent River Wetland

USFWS

### Sample Public Scoping Comments Received:

The following is a sampler of comments received from the public scoping meetings, email, and regular mail:

“Ideally think the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge should attempt to meet the multiple use recreational needs of all visitors. It is a public treasure and with you as its stewards it should flourish.”

“We enjoy hunting, and fishing on, and along the Sacramento River, its not just recreation, but a way of life.”

“The public has the privilege to utilize lands that are owned by the people of the United States of America. I am a hunter, a wildlife photographer, and a backpacker. I can see no reason why any of these activities should not be allowed on a limited basis on this NWR.....”

“Unrestricted rights to hunt, fish & camp 24 hours a day, 365 days a year below the high water line along the Sacramento River. Road access with perhaps a daily or annual permit. Nominal fee for such permit & access.”

“Allow camping on the gravel bars-enforce no littering laws.”

“Protecting endangered species should not prohibit public use.”

“Comprehensive inventory of refuge resources i.e. Fish and Wildlife habitat, existing & potential recreation areas, etc.”

“Our organizations oppose the commercial and recreational killing....of wildlife on our NWR system.”

“Request that you keep fishing and other public recreation in mind throughout your decision making process.”

“More public access to the river”

“I would like to see the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge allow public access, including disabled access, to expand the recreational desires of birders, hunters, fishermen, photographers, picnickers, campers, and day hikers.”

“The need to maintain public access to the river, and its banks in our area. Many people cannot afford to buy, operate, and maintain a boat, and can only fish from the banks.”

“The use of public tax dollars should allow for public access.”

“Public access during CCP process”

“No public access to refuge lands.”

“Increase enforcement personnel to allow access to more areas.”

“Public lands should be open to the PUBLIC.”

“Public access is the single biggest issue of public interest”

“Information / Brochures about the River (Water-Ways Maps).”

“River Ecology vs. River Management”

“All areas above high water should be managed similar to DFG. Class B or C refuges via road access w/either daily or annual permits”

“One thing that might be in the U.S.F.W. benefit is to include on all the maps to show people all of the public land offered to them so it may take pressure off of you guys”

“Do not impose a speed limit on the Sacramento River alongside the refuges”

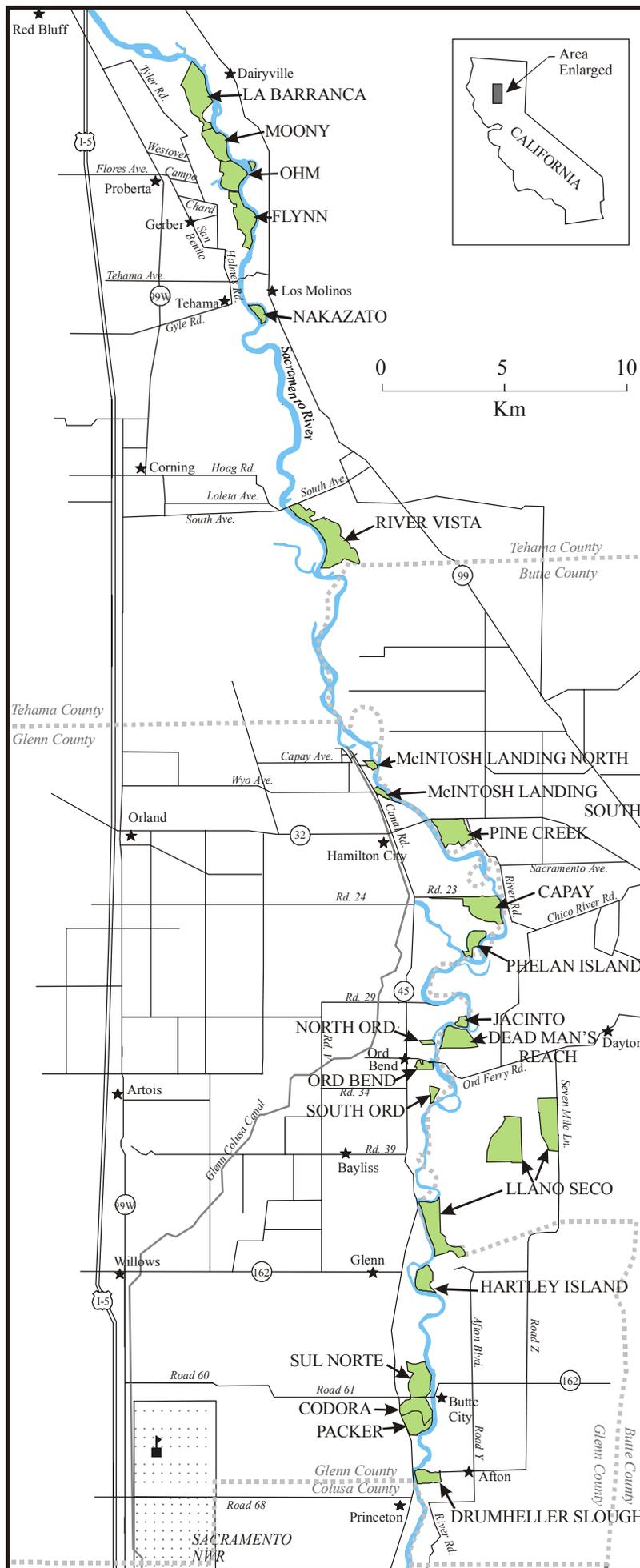
“Need to have more education programs-no charge and coordinated with local schools-will show a direct benefit to local schools-fund substitute teachers”

“What happens to the NWR land when it erodes? Does it become “public again”?”

“To what extent will levees, diversions, canals, and other man made facilities need to be removed or modified?”

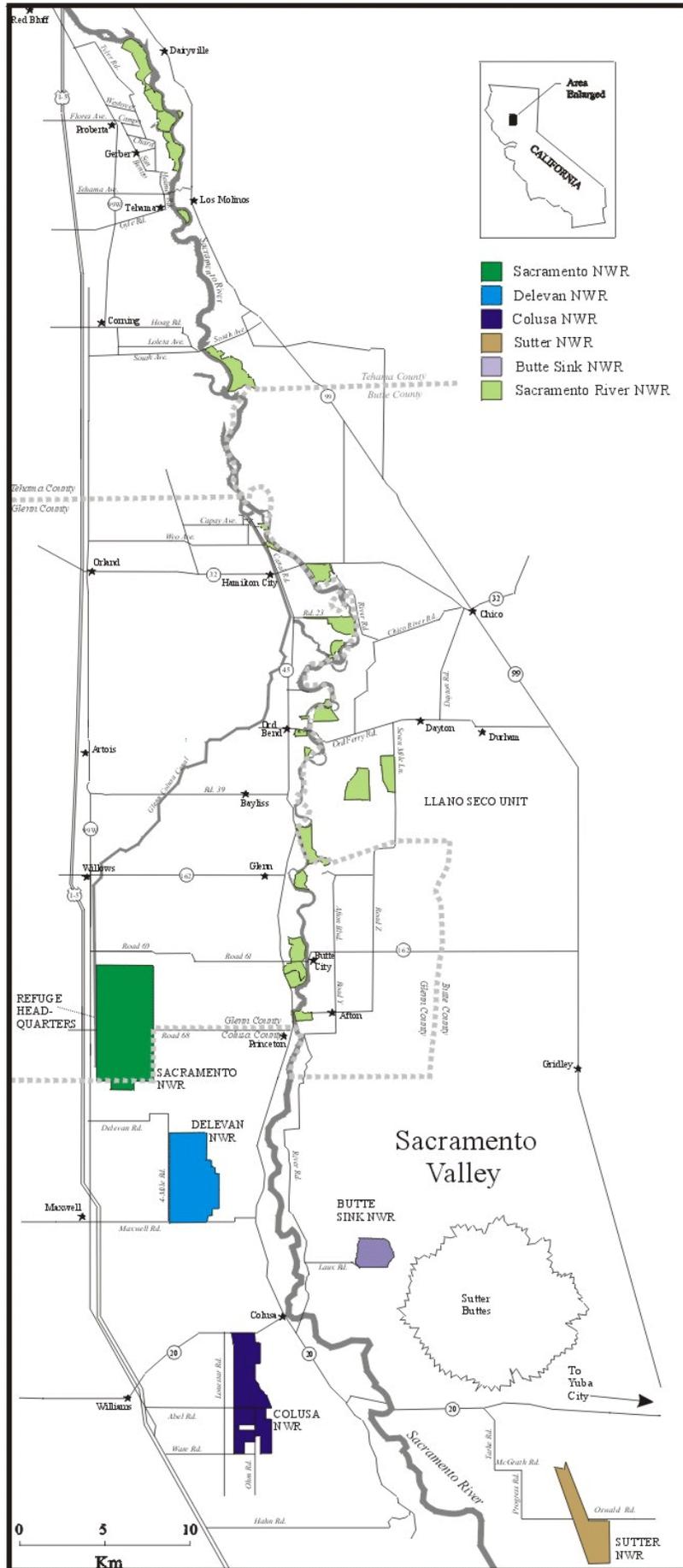
# SACRAMENTO RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

  
**Refuge  
Unit**



Sacramento River NWR Map (May 2001)

# SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX



Mar 2001

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex

“Fish, fowl, & water”...when water becomes more scarce, there’s concern that the refuge will take water away from agriculture.”

“Request that the FWS implement a rigorous biological inventory and analysis of the refuge’s fish and wildlife populations as required by law.”

“To what extent should the river be permitted to meander free of man-made restraints?”

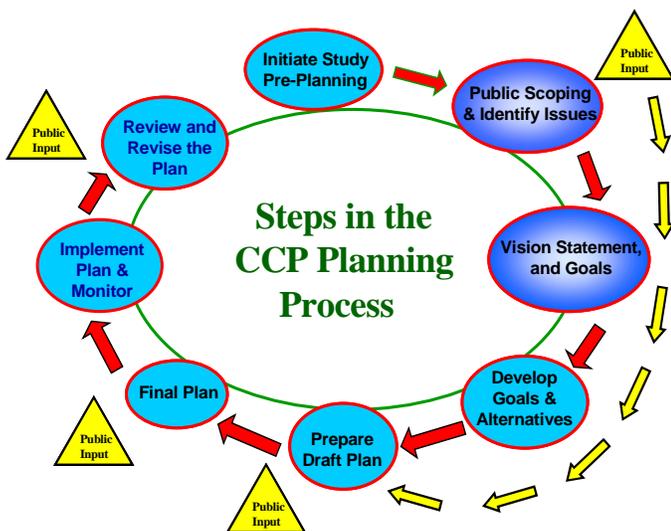
“Will the narrow width of the Refuge allow for adequate riparian vegetation to meet the goals....?”

**An Update on the Refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan Process**

Where are we now in the CCP process after the public scoping meetings? The CCP team is reviewing issues and comments received, gathering information, updating data and maps, and coordinating efforts with other partners and agencies.

The next major step is in refining the Refuge vision and goals to generate objectives and strategies which will provide the foundation for the development of the alternative management plans.

**CCP Refuge Information**



Comprehensive Conservation Planning Process Cycle

From discussions and comments during the public scoping meetings, we are providing additional information and re-stating important material presented at the meetings:

Refuge and Complex Maps (See Insert)

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge System Mission Statement:

“The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge Purpose (as stated in Federal legislation) is:

“... to conserve (A) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species... or (B) plants ...” 16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)

“... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ...” 16 U.S.C. 742f (a) (4)

“... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or conditions of servitude ...” 16 U.S.C. 742f (b) (1) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

**Draft Vision and Goals**

As part of the pre-planning stage, draft statements and goals were developed. These will be used as the basis for finalizing the Refuge vision statement and goals, and during the creation of the Refuge objectives, strategies, and subsequent alternatives:

Draft Refuge Vision Statement:

*“Working with partners and local communities to conserve, protect, and enhance a healthy Sacramento River system for wildlife, habitat, and the American people.”*

#### Draft Refuge Goals:

- Provide natural habitats and management to restore and perpetuate endangered, threatened, or species of special concern.
- Preserve a natural diversity and abundance of flora and fauna.
- Provide opportunities for the understanding and appreciation of wildlife ecology and the human role in the environment; and provide high-quality wildlife dependent recreation, education, and research.
- Provide a diversity of wetland habitats for an abundance of migratory birds, particularly waterfowl and other water birds.

#### **Other Refuge Information:**

##### **Update on the “Environmental Assessment and Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact for Proposed Restoration Activities on the Sacramento River NWR Report”**

The comment period on the draft "Environmental Assessment and Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact for Proposed Restoration Activities on the Sacramento River NWR (May 2001)" closed on July 6, 2001.

The document evaluated the effects of restoring or enhancing natural vegetation on 2,372 acres within the refuge (Ryan, Ohm, Haleakala, Pine Creek\*, Kaiser, Phelan Island, Koehnen, Hartley Island, and Stone Units). The northern portion of the Pine Creek Unit is not within the existing refuge but was included at the request of the current private

landowner who is attempting to sell the property to the refuge. Refuge staff will evaluate the comments and propose a final action this fall.

#### **For More Information:**

We are available to provide additional information regarding the Refuge and the planning process.



River Meander Complexity

USFWS

Also, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff can attend a meeting of your organization to discuss the development of the Sacramento River Refuge CCP. Please notify us at least three weeks in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts.

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or would like information about the Refuge, please feel free to call, e-mail, or write us:

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**For More Information**

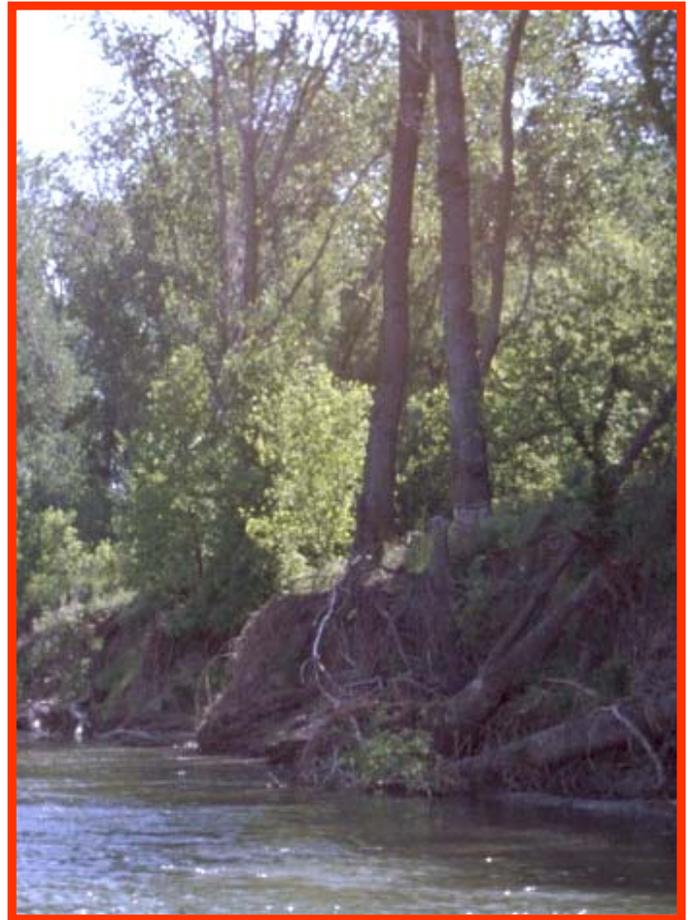
Or check out the following sites on the Web for more Refuge information and copies of past Planning Updates:

<http://pacific.fws.gov/sacnwrc/>

<http://pacific.fws.gov/planning/>

Please pass this planning update along to anyone you think might be interested in the planning process. Thank you!

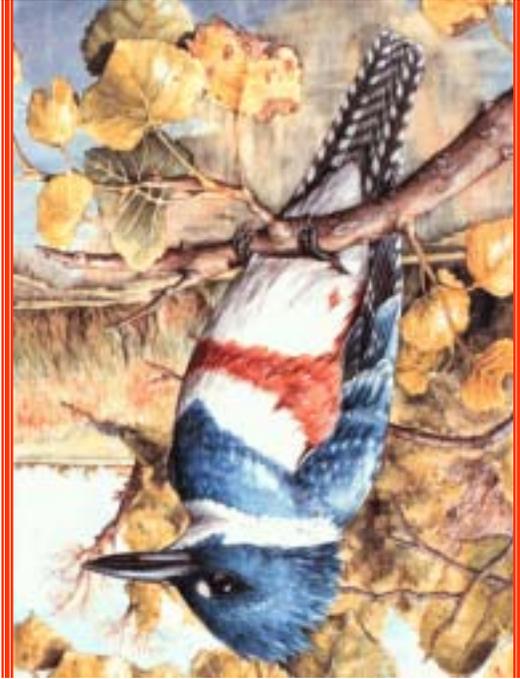
Call, write, or email us to be placed on our mailing list to report a change in your mailing address, or if you want to be removed from the mailing list.



Riparian Forest Bank With Structural Complexity USFWS



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